

**Press meeting
Friday 16th September, 3:00 to 4:00pm
with the photographer**



Iran through the eyes of Homa
Persia from above

aerial photographs by
Georg Gerster

an exhibition at the
Niavaran Cultural Center, Tehran
September 16th to October 1st, 2016



Georg Gerster

Swiss-born Georg Gerster is a pioneer in aerial photography.

For more than 50 years he has taken breathtaking pictures of mountains and deserts, coasts and lakes, and agrarian and industrial landscapes all over the world.

He took his first aerial photographs in the Sudan in 1963 and since then has taken photographs over 111 countries across the seven continents, photographing terrains ranging from the Amazon to Antarctica. He has captured some of the world's most spectacular archaeological sites and ancient monuments – from the temples in Egypt and the Acropolis in Athens to the Great Wall of China.



In 1976, he is the laureate of the Prix Nadar.

From 1975 to 1995, Gerster shot a series of now-highly collectible advertising posters for Swissair.

More than 41 books have been published under his name. His work has been presented in numerous museums and his photographs, assembled in portfolios, have been bought by about thirty collectors.

Gerster sees his work as a philosophical instrument: “Distance creates an overview, and an overview facilitates insight while insight generates consideration – perhaps,” he says. Based near Zürich in Switzerland, he has also worked as a journalist and was a regular contributor to the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* and *National Geographic*.

Georg Gerster and Persia

In 1858 the French photographer Nadar took the first aerial photographs using a hot air balloon. He photographed Paris from above. A hundred years later Georg Gerster stepped into a small aircraft to make his first aerial images. Both of them, Nadar and Gerster, were overwhelmed by the experience: how the newly won perspective reveals what we all too often ignore on the ground – the beauty, diversity and uniqueness of our planet.

Flying over Iran marked the apogee of Gerster's world tour saga. Except for exciting landscapes he focuses from the beginning of his activity on Iran's innumerable archaeological sites of which Unesco has designated 19 sites a World Heritage. Linking aerial photography and archaeology yields spectacular results – sites that are hardly visible or readable to a groundling, from above make a dramatic appearance among moving sand dunes.

In the case of Iran, a bird's eye view is not incongruous for more than one reason. Apart from its scientific benefits it may also claim a cultural significance. The mythology of ancient Persia exhibits a fondness for auspicious birds as harbingers of Peace, Joy and Happiness. The Homa, a legendary bird of paradise, is one of them, flying high, only rarely alighting. “Though I had to land from time to time, in hour-long flights when under me the earth blissfully metamorphosed into a work of art I believed to feel Homa's presence”.

Georg Gerster's images demonstrate his technical ability, his instinct of composition and his faith in serendipity, which means chancing upon things without looking for them. His images elevated aerial photography from being a mere means of documentation to a photographic art form in its own right. The combination of abstract patterns in the landscapes and their wealth of different colors, seen from above, aims to inspire respect for the beauty of Iran and our planet. Gerster's images trigger the need of contemplation; they are, in the words of the artist, „jumping-off points for flights of thought“.

Georg Gerster shows for the first time the results of his Iranian tour in their entirety. He feels especially privileged to be able to do so in the Niavaran Cultural Center of Tehran.

He offers this exhibition to the country. It is his return gift.

H. E. Gholamali Khoshroo

Gholamali Khoshroo is the Ambassador of Iran to the United Nations Security Council, NYC. He also served as a special adviser to Iran's former president, Mohammad Khatami, on the "Alliance of civilizations" and "Dialogue among civilizations". He has served as the dean of the School for International Relations (1983-1989), as an Ambassador to the United Nations (1989-1995) as Deputy Foreign Minister for Research and Education, and as a member of the OIC (Organization of the Islamic Conference) Commission of Eminent Persons on "Enlightened Moderation". In recent years he has worked extensively on the development of contemporary political Islam and its implications for Western societies. As a sociologist he studied at Tehran University and the New School for Social Research in New York. He has published several articles and books on political and cultural affairs and is also well known as the senior editor of the Encyclopedia of Contemporary Islam.



Sylvie Bouny

French-born Sylvie Bouny is Gerster's agent for special projects. In 1990 she founded a photography festival in Bordeaux to which she invited Gerster. She managed the press photo agency Cosmos, based in Paris, from 1995 until 2004 before becoming a producer of photo reports for the German press (Geo, Stern, Spiegel). She is now a freelance photo adviser for private companies.



Marjan Saboori

CEO of Iranian Tourism Office in France & Orient Heritage

Specialist of Iran and Central Asia, highly experienced she worked closely with the European agencies of the TUI group. Marjan Saboori founded in 2006 the Orient Heritage Association. Since 2010, she also manages the Iranian Office of Tourism in Paris, focused in the organization of cultural travels in Iran she leads herself. She takes an active part in the Iranian Cultural Centre to organize events.

"I am delighted to be associated with this exhibition which will take place in the fascinating Farhangestan Niavaran, in our beautiful capital Tehran. Georg Gerster gives us his aerial vision, like the Homa, the divine bird of the Persian literature, flying in celestial heights with protective wings looking after those he can help. It is indeed the artistic symbol of the endless sequence of life. Often away from my country and in this multicultural context, I broaden my knowledges to know better my culture and traditions, bringing them into contact with other people and societies. Cultural Métis, I am breathing artistic trends."



Touring & Automobile Club of the Islamic Republic of Iran

Tourism & Handicraft department

represented by Mr. Ebrahim Rezaei Babadi and Mr. Ebadreza Islami Koulaei



Office du Tourisme
de l'Iran à Paris

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Where is the exhibition ?

Niavaran Cultural Center

Pasdaran Avenue, Tehran, Iran

(in front of the Niavaran park)

Opening hours: 10 am to 8 pm

Open to the public Friday 16th : 4:00 to 8:00 pm

Phone: +98 21 228 011 46

What is displayed ?

124 captioned photos, mostly 80x120 cm

An introduction text by H.E Gholamali Khoshroo

An introduction text by Jean-Philippe Jutzi, Cultural Counselor of the Embassy of Switzerland in France.

When is the exhibition ?

Friday September 16 to Saturday October 1st, 2016

Why doing this exhibition ?

Georg Gerster had a rare opportunity to view the country through the eyes of the Homa – ancient Persia's mythical bird – a feat that nobody since then has been able to repeat.

We deeply believe in the intercultural dialogue.

A return gift, because this exhibition will remain in the Islamic Republic of Iran for good.

Contacts

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